

**Providers Reminded that Surveyors Are To Be Given
Unrestricted Access to Medical Records**

Des Moines, IA (April 19, 2011) – Medicare certified health care providers and suppliers are reminded that surveyors are to be provided unrestricted access to medical records regardless of whether the facilities use paper-based records or Electronic Health Records (EHRs). For providers and suppliers using EHRs, the survey team must request during the entrance conference that a terminal(s) be provided where the surveyors may access records. In the case of a hospital or other provider or supplier with terminals at multiple care locations, surveyors must be provided access to a terminal at each care location.

The expanded use of EHRs means that surveyors will increasingly encounter more facilities that no longer have paper-based records. Surveyors must be able to conduct the survey process in a consistent manner in all facilities regardless of whether the facility uses paper-based or electronic records. In its August 2009 Survey & Certification Letter (S&C-09-53), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) cautioned providers and suppliers that impeding the survey process by unnecessarily delaying or restricting access to medical records may lead to termination from Medicare participation. A copy of S&C-09-53 can be found at the following web address: http://www.cms.gov/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/downloads/SCLetter09_53.pdf.

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